

EVERY member of the Wycombe Wanderers side stands to win a transistor radio if they win Thursday night's Hitachi Isthmian Cup quarter-final away to the FA Trophy finalists Leatherhead, writes MICHAEL KNOX.

That's the reward the sponsors have donated to all sides reaching the final. These prizes have certainly given the players something to compete for and the Hitachi Cup is now Wycombe's prime objective this season.

The match should have been played on Wednesday but it has been put back 24 hours for two reasons. Leatherhead, who have a tremendous fixture congestion, wanted a break because of the spate of matches and I understand the sponsors preferred it not to clash with the England-Brazil game, being shown live on television.

Blues hope to welcome back Graham Mackenzie who missed Monday night's match against Hitchin with influenza, but will be without teacher Howard Kennedy on a school trip in Minehead and goalkeeper Peter Spittle, whose groin strain has

not yet mended.

The switch means that Wanderers have had to postpone their Shaw and Kilburn League visit to Banbury scheduled for Thursday night. The clubs are now having significant problems in trying to rearrange another date.

The main problem concerns the Southern League ruling that all their clubs must complete their season's football before the end of April. At present there is no obvious vacant date.

The most likely chance of fitting the game is for Wycombe to lose their cup-tie at Leatherhead — an unthinkable prospect! — to provide a free date next week. The other option is for the Southern League to extend their finishing date.

Wycombe's fixture programme for the rest of the season is: Thursday, April 20 — Leatherhead (a) HIC; Saturday, April 21 — Croydon (h) IL; Tuesday, April 25 — Walthamstow (h) IL; Thursday, April 27 — Banbury (h) S&K; Friday,

April 28 — Scarborough (h) friendly; Monday, May 1 — Barking (a) IL; Thursday, May 4 — Millwall (h) friendly; Friday, May 5 — Sutton United (h) IL. To be arranged v Banbury (a) and Witney (h) in S&K.

Key: HIC — Hitachi Isthmian Cup; IL — Isthmian League; S&K — Shaw & Kilburn.

Wycombe have no game on Saturday, April 29, due to the FA Trophy final between Leatherhead and Altrincham at Wembley. Tickets for that match can be obtained at Loakes Park during all home matches. The Supporters Club are also running a coach.

WYCOMBE Wanderers depressing run of injuries and misfortune continued at Leatherhead on Thursday when a goal six minutes from the end of extra-time put them out of the Hitachi Isthmian League Cup at the quarter-final stage.

The match turned on an incident in the very last minute of normal time when Wycombe's captain and centre-back Keith Mead had to be carried of the field with a severe ankle injury.

Mead appeared to fall awkwardly after a challenge from home forward John Baker just outside the penalty area. Wycombe were awarded the free-kick, but it seemed that the foul did not cause the injury.

Leatherhead 1, Wycombe Wanderers 0 (a.e.t.) Report by MICHAEL KNOX

The Blues' skipper was then stretchered to the dressing room and a later X-Ray in hospital revealed that he had damaged ligaments at the back of the left ankle. It seems most likely that he will miss the rest of the season.

This injury came at a most unfortunate time for Wanderers, as six minutes earlier they had brought on their substitute Dave Bullis for Dylan Evans.

DEFENCE RESHUFFLE

So, Wycombe not only had to reshuffle their defence, but also play the 30 minutes of extra time with a man short, and two of those players who remained —

Tony Horseman and Roger Day — could be put into the veteran class.

The defensive reshuffle was almost total. Bobby Davies joined Alan Phillips at the centre of the defence, Paul Birdseye switched over to left back while mid-field man Graham Mackenzie filled the right back berth.

As so often happens, Wycombe fought harder with ten men than they would have done with 11, and with Leatherhead — in the middle of seven matches in 12 days — tiring, it appeared the match would go to replay.

However, the pressure on Wycombe was intolerable and they finally conceded a goal. It came six minutes from the end just after the admirable Phillips

had cleared Baker's shot off the line.

In the next attack, John Bailey — a last minute replacement for Chris Kelly — was given a little too much room just outside the penalty area. He had time to tee up his shot and send a low fierce drive into the left hand corner of the net from 20 yards past the diving Peter Spittle.

It was a splendidly taken goal, which caused tremendous relief among the Fetcham Grove supporters who will be off to Wembley on Saturday to support their side in the F.A. Trophy final against Altrincham. The last thing they wanted at this stage was a replay.

These are exciting days at Leatherhead, with local firms jumping on the Wembley bandwagon and wanting to be connected with the club. It was perhaps these distractions allied to a fear of getting injured before the 'big day' that led to tepid performance from them in the first half.

Wycombe, who welcomed back Spittle and Mackenzie but missed the services of John Priestley with a knee injury, had the better of the first half and but for their continued poor shooting would have taken the lead.

Horseman sent a curling free-kick into the side netting, while Phillips rose majestically to Mackenzie's free-kick only to see his fine header cleared off the line by Cook.

BEST CHANCE

The best chance of the half fell to Mick Holfield, who showed more commitment than in some previous games. John Swannell could not hold Derek Harris's fierce shot and the ball fell to Holfield who ballooned it over the bar from close range.

Leatherhead reminded Blues of their potential when Dave Reid nearly scored with a header in the 34th minute, but it was in the second half that Tanners took control and began to pile on the pressure.

The speedy John Doyle, attacking down the left, caused particular problems and Spittle had to be on the alert to keep his goal intact. Indeed the goalkeeper twice saved shots with his feet.

First Doyle broke clear and shot for goal. Spittle's deflection slowed up the shot, giving Davies time to race back and clear off the line. Then Bailey saw a shot deflected for a corner by the fortunate Spittle, who then saved another effort from Doyle.

Leatherhead were now firing on all cylinders and Wycombe were becoming distinctly ragged as the pressure mounted. But their defence stayed firm until Mead's injury swayed the odds heavily in their opponents' favour.

LEATHERHEAD: J. Swannell, J. Cooper, B. Edgar, B. Davies, D. Reid, D. Mallay, M. Cook, W. Salkeld, J. Bailey, J. Baker, J. Doyle. Sub: C. Brooks.

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle, P. Birdseye, R. Davies, K. Mead, A. Phillips, R. Day, G. Mackenzie, M. Holfield, D. Harris, D. Evans (sub: D. Bullis 76 mins), A. Horseman.

Referee: J. Martin.

Half time 0-0. Full time 0-0. Scorer: Leatherhead: Bailey (114th min).

IF Wycombe Wanderers are to finish runners-up to Enfield for the third year running they must win their Isthmian League Premier Division match at home to Croydon tomorrow (Saturday).

Croydon have been one of the successes this season and now stand fifth, with two games to play. However they must have been unsettled by their midweek defeat against the ever-improving Walthamstow Avenue.

ISTHMIAN LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION (Up to April 18)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Enfield	38	31	6	2	97	25	99
Dagenham	39	22	7	10	76	52	73
Wycombe	38	21	6	11	61	37	69
Tooting	37	19	8	10	55	42	65
Hitchin	37	17	9	11	61	51	60
Croydon	40	17	9	14	58	51	60
Sutton	36	17	9	10	58	50	60
Hayes	40	15	11	14	46	49	56
Leatherhead	32	15	8	9	51	34	53
C'halton	39	14	11	14	59	60	52
Walthamstow	34	14	10	10	55	50	52
Barking	39	15	7	17	69	61	52
Hendon	38	15	8	17	53	50	51
Boreham Wd	38	14	8	16	46	50	50
Woking	38	12	10	16	54	56	46
Staines	40	11	13	16	45	58	46
Slough	37	13	6	18	44	59	45
Tilbury	38	10	11	17	48	61	41
Kingston	41	7	13	21	40	64	34
Ley stone	41	6	15	20	43	71	33
Southall	39	6	14	20	41	71	29
Stortford	38	7	8	24	33	71	29